



**Convention on the Elimination
of All Forms of Discrimination
against Women**

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**Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination
against Women**
Fortieth session

Summary record of the 810th meeting

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Monday, 14 January 2008, at 10 a.m.

Chairperson: Ms. Šimonović

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The meeting was called to order at 10.20 a.m.

Opening of the session

1. **The Chairperson** declared open the fortieth session of the Committee.

2. **Ms. Kang** (Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights) welcomed the Committee to Geneva and expressed the hope that its presence there would contribute to the strengthening of the treaty body system. She trusted that through its future relations with the Human Rights Council the Committee would also help to take the entire human rights agenda forward by prioritizing women's rights and gender mainstreaming. During and after the transfer of responsibility for servicing the Committee to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the latter would ensure that the strong links between the Committee and the Division for the Advancement of Women were maintained and that the Committee's work remained an integral part of any new United Nations structure responsible for promoting gender equality.

3. She drew attention to a number of major developments in the area of human rights that had taken place since the Committee's thirty-ninth session. On 13 September 2007, the General Assembly had adopted the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, which, inter alia, addressed the individual and collective rights of indigenous peoples and prohibited discrimination against them. The adoption of the Declaration represented a further step towards the consolidation of the international human rights system and was a key development in efforts to protect and promote women's rights, given that indigenous women and girls were often the victims of multiple discrimination.

4. Since the conclusion of the Committee's thirty-ninth session, the Human Rights Council had completed its institution-building process and, by its resolution 5/1, had established the universal periodic review mechanism. The Council had also decided to incorporate the outputs of the treaty bodies into the review process. The Working Group on the universal periodic review mechanism was due to review 48 States in 2008 and, since a number of the 16 States to be considered at its first session would also be submitting reports to the Committee in 2008, it might be useful for the latter to

reflect on the implications of the review mechanism for its work.

5. The Human Rights Council's discussion on mainstreaming a gender perspective into its work had been extremely successful and, at its resumed sixth session, it had adopted a resolution on integrating the human rights of women throughout the United Nations system. That resolution provided, inter alia, for incorporating into the Council's programme of work sufficient and adequate time to discuss the human rights of women, including measures that could be adopted by States and other stakeholders to address human rights violations committed against them. The first such meeting was due to take place in the first half of 2008 and, as mandated by the General Assembly, would include a discussion on violence against women. The Council had also decided to hold an annual discussion on mainstreaming a gender perspective into its work and that of its mechanisms.

6. Since its thirty-ninth session, the Committee had continued to pursue its efforts to strengthen the treaty body system. The sixth inter-committee meeting and the nineteenth meeting of chairpersons had recommended that the inter-committee meeting should take place twice a year and that the chairpersons of the treaty bodies should participate as ex officio members. The inter-committee meeting would be responsible for coordinating efforts relating to the improvement and potential harmonization of the working methods of the human rights treaty bodies and for making relevant recommendations. In addition, OHCHR had sent a note verbale to all Permanent Missions in which it had recommended that, when submitting reports to all human rights treaty bodies, States parties should adhere to the harmonized guidelines on reporting. In order to further disseminate those guidelines, the Office planned to hold briefings with States parties.

7. OHCHR was committed to pursuing its efforts to enhance awareness and understanding of the treaty body system and to facilitate the implementation of treaty body recommendations at the national level. To that end, it conducted regular training workshops designed to illustrate the ways in which key actors, such as national human rights institutions, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and the media, could contribute to the reporting and implementation process and had developed various tools to build its technical cooperation capacity. Efforts were also under way to improve the websites and databases of the

treaty bodies and to gather examples of national best practices concerning the implementation of human rights treaty provisions and treaty body recommendations.

8. At its sixty-second session, the General Assembly had adopted resolution 62/218 on the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, by which it had approved the extension of the Committee's meeting time. Accordingly, the Committee would hold five sessions in 2008 and 2009, three of which would be in parallel chambers. It should give careful consideration to the question of how to organize its work in order to take full advantage of that decision. The General Assembly had also adopted a number of other resolutions on the rights of women and children, including one recommending the appointment of a special representative on violence against children.

9. Lastly, she said that the Committee's workload was likely to remain heavy for the foreseeable future. In that connection, she commended the Committee for its ongoing efforts to improve its working methods and assured its members of her Office's full support.

Adoption of the agenda and organization of work (CEDAW/C/2008/I/1)

10. **The Chairperson** drew attention to document CEDAW/C/2008/I/1 and said she took it that the Committee wished to adopt the proposed provisional agenda and organization of work, subject to any necessary adjustments.

11. *It was so decided.*

Report of the Chairperson on activities undertaken between the thirty-ninth and fortieth sessions of the Committee

12. **The Chairperson** said that the transfer of responsibility for servicing the Committee to OHCHR was an important step in the process of harmonizing the human rights treaty body system. She hoped that it would also serve to encourage all treaty bodies, as well as the Human Rights Council and other human rights mechanisms, to continue their efforts to mainstream a gender perspective into their work. In that connection, the sixtieth anniversary of the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights provided a further opportunity to stress the importance of equality between women and men and the prohibition of discrimination against women.

13. Since the thirty-ninth session, she had undertaken a number of activities in her capacity as Chairperson of the Committee. Her statement to the sixty-second session of the General Assembly had focused on the Committee's request for an extension of its meeting time. She was pleased that the Assembly had responded positively to that request, particularly since the increase in the number of sessions would allow the Committee to fulfil its responsibilities in an effective and timely manner without having to submit a new request for an extension every two years. The Assembly's decision also granted the Committee the flexibility to determine its own programme of work for the biennium 2008-2009 and authorized the Working Group on Communications to meet three times a year for a total of 10 working days. While there had been some disagreement among Member States regarding the location of the Committee's sessions and resolution 62/218 had not been adopted by consensus, the General Assembly's final decision, which had significant financial implications, clearly reflected the commitment of States parties to ensuring compliance with treaty obligations.

14. The Committee's informal meeting, which had taken place from 23 to 26 October 2007 in Geneva, had been attended by 15 Committee members and significant progress had been made on a number of issues. The agreements reached at that meeting, which related, inter alia, to treaty-specific reporting guidelines and interaction with national human rights institutions, would be reviewed at the current session with a view to taking the appropriate action.

15. In September 2007, she had travelled to Montenegro to take part in a regional conference on reporting under the Convention, which had been organized in order to support that country's efforts to draft its initial report to the Committee. In October 2007, she had attended a regional seminar on support and protection for victims of domestic violence, held in Espoo, Finland, at which she had delivered an introductory statement on the obligation of States parties to combat violence against women. She had also taken part in a conference on women's participation in governance in Beijing.

16. At an international conference commemorating 10 years of Austrian legislation to combat violence, held in early November 2007 in Vienna, she had given a presentation on the Committee's findings in two cases against Austria submitted under the Optional

Protocol. Later in November, she had taken part in a workshop on the implementation of the Convention in Vanuatu and in December she had attended a regional conference in Bangkok entitled “Women and Children: The Human Rights Relationship”.

17. In closing, she expressed the hope that the Committee would take full advantage of the new opportunities afforded by its location to forge strong links with the human rights machinery and other partners in Geneva and that it would safeguard and reinforce its institutional relationship with the Division for the Advancement of Women, as well as any future United Nations structure responsible for promoting gender equality.

18. **Ms. Shin** speaking as Chairperson of the pre-session working group for the fortieth session, said that, at its July session, eight members of the Committee had met to examine 16 reports of States parties for consideration at the fortieth and forty-first sessions of the Committee. It had also produced lists of issues regarding the reports to be considered at the fortieth session. The report of the working group would be issued as document CEDAW/PSWG/2008/I/CRP.1.

19. In preparing the lists of issues, the working group had decided to change the wording of the heading “Women in vulnerable situations” to “Situation of vulnerable groups of women”. She also noted that a non-governmental organization had been present during the session of the working group; such groups were welcomed and encouraged to participate in its meetings.

Implementation of article 21 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and ways and means of expediting the work of the Committee

20. **Ms. Connors** (Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights) said that, under article 21 of the Convention, task forces had been formed to draft a general recommendation on migrant women and a general recommendation on article 4; those task forces would provide briefings to the Committee during the current session. She pointed out that other treaty bodies provided delegations the opportunity to comment on draft general recommendations, a practice the Committee might wish to consider.

21. With regard to article 22 of the Convention, the note by Secretary-General contained in document

CEDAW/C/2008/I/3 and its addenda contained the reports of specialized agencies on the implementation of the Convention. Turning to ways and means of expediting the work of the Committee, she noted that the report contained in document CEDAW/C/2008/I/4 addressed developments in the Human Rights Council with an impact on the work of the Committee, issues regarding its work raised in the General Assembly, a report on the Committee’s sixth informal meeting, the implications of the transfer from the Division on the Advancement of Women to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights on its servicing, and the posting of summary records of meetings on the Committee website.

The meeting rose at 11.05 a.m.